

# DOES THE ARMY NEED A CONTINGENCY CONTRACTING MOS FOR NCOs?

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*Editor's Note: This is the second of a two-part article that discusses whether establishing a military occupational specialty (MOS) for noncommissioned officers (NCOs) within the Army contracting structure will benefit the Army and its enlisted contracting personnel. The first part appeared in the September-October 2000 issue of Army AL&T and discussed background information and current issues faced by the Army and contracting NCOs.*

*This final article discusses benefits and associated challenges involved in establishing a contracting MOS and presents recommendations.*

## Introduction

What are the perceived benefits of establishing a new career field for contracting NCOs with the Additional Skill Identifier (ASI) G1 (contracting agent)?

A new MOS will provide stability, continuity, and greater institutional knowledge in contingency contracting commands. Like NCOs in other branches of the Army, NCOs are the backbone of a contracting organization. Contingency contracting officers (CCOs) are required to have a broad range of skills in contingency and administrative contracting as well as contract and program management. Additionally, CCOs are required to rotate through various job positions to remain competitive for promotion. The continual exodus of NCOs and CCOs is making it difficult for contingency contracting organizations to maintain qualified officers and NCOs for contingency operations. Thus, if NCOs could remain

in a contracting organization and provide continuity and stability, their contracting skills and knowledge would continue to grow and benefit commanders on the ground and entire contracting organizations. More important though, this retained knowledge base would be beneficial to deployed troops in the field.

Additionally, a new MOS will improve an NCO's professional development, allow NCOs to single track, and create greater promotion opportunities (mirroring those of officers in the acquisition field). NCOs would compete against other NCOs with similar jobs, preventing the biased nature of the current promotion boards. NCOs would continue to gain experience and take the necessary Defense Acquisition University courses to become highly competent and warranted contracting officers and combat multipliers (when deployed).

Further, a new MOS would reduce the current deployment workload of the CCO and allow for a larger pool of qualified contracting specialists available for mobilization. The current operations tempo requires two 6-month deployments every 2 years for CCOs. Deployable NCOs would reduce back-to-back deployments for many of the officers. In addition, if both were deployed on a contingency mission, the contracting NCO could handle the routine acquisition tasks, leaving the CCO free to work on more complex issues. Furthermore, NCOs and CCOs would be interchangeable, depending on proficiency levels. This also allows the officer to become more involved in planning and leadership.

## Implementation Issues

How does the Army build an MOS? To establish a new MOS, the Army first must overcome the Average Grade Distribution Matrix (AGDM), the structure-of-grades model in the Army. The AGDM model shows the average percentages necessary per grade to ensure successful distribution. This matrix gives the percentages required within an MOS pyramid to achieve optimal career progression. Because the AGDM dictates the percentages per grades, the matrix is also a baseline for allocating money per grade within each career management field (CMF). The AGDM is the base model commanders use as a guideline for the percent limits in each MOS; however, commanders can redistribute within the model to fix shortages and surpluses. Currently, there is a limited quantity of personnel with whom to build an MOS within the contracting field.

There are only 42 positions available Armywide for ASI G1. These positions range from sergeant to master sergeant, with no advancement to sergeant major. To build an MOS, the aggregate total percentages would need to follow the AGDM for the optimum career growth, which also allows for the best competitive advantages. The AGDM must be overlaid with the operational requirements to determine percentages of personnel within the MOS. The AGDM is based on multiples of 100, but it does not reflect the required number of personnel necessary to establish an MOS.

There are several issues associated with small percentages of personnel within a given MOS. One concern is having enough people to allow opportunities for promotion within the MOS. Career progression in a small MOS is slow, which means longer duration times at lower ranks.

## Other Concerns

*Establishing An MOS.* Recent revisions in the organizational structure of the Theater Support Commands (TSCs) and Force XXI requirements have increased the need for additional ASI G1 personnel. The TSC revision now calls for an additional 16 CMF 92 ASI G1 positions. This requirement includes four sergeant major positions for Senior Logistics Services Supervisors (ASI G1) within each of the TSCs. The TSC revisions also allow for complete vertical movement to the sergeant major level if a decision was made to establish a contracting MOS.

Requirements for the new Force XXI Division, which 4th Division at Fort Hood, TX, is currently transitioning, requires an additional four sergeant first class positions (92Y40 ASI G1) to fulfill the requirements document system. Three positions are located in the Forward Support Battalion and one position is located in the Division Aviation Support Battalion. In the long term, every heavy division in the Army will transition into this configuration, adding a total of 24 positions available for NCOs with the ASI G1. The changes in these organizational structures will allow the Army to meet AR 211-601.

*Professional Development.* Another concern is how to designate a training path for the NCOs. Professional development must be in accordance with AR 600-3, *The Army Personnel Proponent System (APPS)*. Personnel proponents are responsible for the eight life-cycle management functions of their respective career fields. As such, they take the lead in defining developmental needs, refining requirements in the field, and providing assistance to improve all aspects of the Army's personnel management system. The personnel proponent would recommend or determine appropriate accession criteria for enlisted personnel, identify

training criteria by career field, and ensure that training for career development is in concert with all aspects of professional development. Because there is no schoolhouse or branch that currently supports the schooling requirements (i.e., Basic or Advanced NCO Course (BNCOC/ANCOC)), where would contracting NCOs go to receive the required training, and who would support the training?

The final concern is how to develop the institutional training within the operational assignments and the development of a career progression within the assignments. Currently, the Army Acquisition Corps (AAC) is just a proponent with no soldiers, and the ASI G1 function falls under the personnel proponent of the Quartermaster (QM) General. Further, because the QM is not a branch proponent for the AAC, there is an ownership challenge.

## Summary

Clearly, the current enlisted force structure of contingency contracting is not as effective as it could be. The career development model for NCOs in the contracting field requires major restructuring.

Establishing a new MOS would benefit combat commanders, contracting NCOs, and contingency contracting commands. The contracting skills and knowledge accrued by NCOs would continue to multiply and benefit warfighters as combat multipliers along with the entire contracting community. With the establishment of the MOS, NCOs would be allowed to single track, thus, creating greater promotion opportunities.

All MOSs that are not critically short should be considered Armywide for accession into the contracting field. A yearly accession board for NCOs should be established that coincides with the officer board. Preferably, the majority of accessions should come from CMF 92 because of the similarities in job descriptions. NCOs should be accessed into the contracting field at the grades of sergeant through sergeant first class, but all sergeants first class should be carefully screened to ensure the Army receives full return on their investment.

Another recommendation is for the AAC to become the functional proponent and for the QM Corps to handle the normal MOS personnel proponent. Currently, the AAC is a proponent with no schoolhouse or branch that supports professional developmental requirements. The AAC can develop the training requirements but must rely on CMFs for support of the schoolhouse courses (i.e., BNCOC and ANCOC). The advantage to this recommendation is that the QM has the schoolhouse and necessary developmental courses already established for the CMF 92 MOS.

The Army must develop a separate functional area MOS for contracting NCOs that includes a designated career progression and training path comparable to basic branch MOS schools. Contracting NCOs are the combat multipliers for the warfighting commanders who will ensure mission success in any given tactical environment.

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